Purpose of Paper

This is a revised and condensed version of the paper reviewed at the board retreat. Its purpose is to serve as the basis for discussion at the Academic Strategies Committee meeting. The final product will be a strategy framework and method for allocating targets for use by OUS and consideration by HECC and OEIB. The purpose of the discussion at the committee meeting is:

- Make note of tentative definition of the goal
- Discuss whether allocating targets should be a top down or bottom up approach
- Discuss methods for incorporating other policy considerations into the framework

Defining the Goal

Subject to refinement and discussion with State education officials, the goal will be defined as bachelor’s degree or higher degrees achieved by forty percent of each new one-year cohort of Oregonians.

In its simplest form, this calculation might begin with the number of ninth graders in any given year and say that 40 percent of that number should achieve at least a bachelor's degree. Monitoring achievement could take one of two forms:

1. Track each student for degree attainment through age, e.g., 35. The complications with this are significant: data availability, delay in monitoring overall progress toward goal, adding in the complication of migration.

2. Since the number of ninth graders is reasonably stable and predictable over time, set the number of degrees to be granted each year at forty percent of that number without regard to achievement of individual students.

Again in simplest form, if there are approximately 50,000 ninth graders, the goal would be to produce 20,000 degrees each year. Demographic projections can be used to set the goal. (Projec-
tions for the number of ninth graders for example, are much more accurate than projections about migration.)

In any given year, those receiving degrees are from many different age groups. However, over time this makes no difference. Over time, the population will move toward achievement of the overall goal.

Why begin with the ninth-grade cohort? That is the point at which most students are still in school, but minimizes the effects of migration before that age. It is a common point of focus that emphasizes the importance of the "pipeline" for secondary education, community colleges, and universities. It has been identified as a critical age for instilling motivation and expectation to attend education beyond high school.

Ultimately it will be up to HECC and OEIB to specify and operationalize the goal. That is why this is labeled as a tentative definition.

**Role of private universities**

Each year, Oregon's private colleges and universities grant approximately 2,400 degrees to Oregonian’s. These degrees should be counted toward meeting the State goal.

**Graduate degrees**

The 40-40-20 goal gives no special consideration to graduate degrees. (If both undergraduate and graduate degrees are counted, there will be double counting.) The board retreat determined that, solely for the purpose of monitoring achievement of the 40-40-20 goal, advanced degrees should not be counted. However, the board expressed concern that the State not lose sight of the importance of graduate education. For now, we will continue to highlight graduate education as a topic that needs further consideration, either within the 40-40-20 framework or in some other way.

**Allocating Targets and Improving Performance**

Once a target for degrees is set or assumed for the State, how should responsibility be divided among OUS institutions?

**Top-down approach**

✔ The board allocates targets to each school

There is simplicity but no strategic reason for scaling up each institution’s existing share of degree production; there are strong reasons for not doing so, primarily that it may be neither the most efficient nor the most equitable. Potential factors to be weighed might include:
• **Fit with mission.** Should missions be more specific about expectations for 40-40-20? Should there be greater differentiation about roles in achieving regional and demographic equity, or carrying responsibility for access and affordability?

• **Efficiency.** Which institutions can provide additional degrees at least cost, including capital investment? Which institutions can contribute effectively and efficiently to the qualitative aspects of 40-40-20 (equity, diversity, high-value degrees, etc.)?

• **Institutional considerations.** If targets for 40-40-20 will affect competitive and financial position of institutions, how should this be factored?

**Bottom-up approach**

✓ Board adopts statewide degree target and funding model with weights for identified groups (e.g. first-generation students, low income students, etc.)

✓ Schools adopt business plans identifying proposed contributions to statewide target

✓ Board reconciles plans and negotiates contributions to reach target

While the bottom-up approach is undoubtedly more cumbersome and uncertain, it is probably more realistic in keeping targets and funding linked and in engaging the schools.

Related to the method for allocating targets is where leadership for improving institutional performance resides. At what level do we understand and act on how much and at what cost might enrollment rates, graduation rates, time-to-degree, etc., improve from:

• Changed pedagogy at universities, including course redesign, use of technology?

• Distance learning and on-line learning?

• A seamless K-16 pipeline?

• Effective Admissions Policy, Financial Aid, and Enrollment Management Systems?

• Retaining students taking diverse pathways to and through college?

• Accelerating and improving completion?
OTHER POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FRAMEWORK

The straight-forward 40-40-20 goal leaves open questions about who gets degrees, where they live, and the quality and nature of those degrees. Creating the framework needs to resolve the following:

- Whether specific sub-group targets should be set. If so on what basis?
- How should targets be linked to funding? In either an enrollment-funding model or an output model, weights can be assigned for specific groups (e.g. first-generation students) but how should weights be determined?

These questions need to be resolved for the following policy considerations.

Geographic and regional equity

The State Board of Higher Education is committed to a set of goals for statewide public higher education that includes positive contributions to the economy and civic and cultural life of communities across the State. How do we value degrees granted by institutions in different regions?

Demographic diversity and underserved populations

In order to reach the 40-40-20 goal, OUS institutions must (1) reduce their achievement gaps, (2) increase retention and graduate rates for all students, and (3) increase enrollment of more:
- Students from rural parts of Oregon (regardless of institution)
- Students of color
- Students from lower socio-economic status
- Students who require more financial aid to realize their college aspirations
- Adult learners

While the aspirations within OUS are clear, how should these be factored into setting targets? What other groups or policy considerations need to be considered?

Targeted degrees

Funding for targeted degrees is now provided directly, making it easier to incorporate these directly into a 40-40-20 strategy.

For future consideration...

Affordability

For the state’s overall 40-40-20 goal, access and affordability are key. They link directly back to the importance of students in middle and high school having the motivation and belief that college is and should be in their future.
The Shared Responsibility Model, control of tuition, and the set-aside of part of tuition increases for financial aid are the basis of the existing affordability policy for students. However, the missing piece is that a mechanism does not exist to link State enrollment funding, tuition, and shared responsibility together in a way that effectively puts the burden on the legislature to be transparent about the number of degrees it is actually willing to fund. Nor is there any direct link to the actual costs of degrees. Without such a link, costs can continue to rise, with tuition and aid both chasing, and access becomes a variable rather than a guarantee or real target.

It is possible to address this in 40-40-20 by way of the weight given to students for whom price and cost are barriers. It is also possible to address, perhaps, through a strategy of paying for degrees.

**Quality of degree**

The quality of OUS degrees should not suffer as a result of meeting the 40-40-20 goal. Questions that will need to be addressed in the future include:

- What consideration should be given to quality of degree, however measured?
- What is the future for moving more toward proficiency assessment for degrees?
- Should the idea of “value” of different types of degrees (majors, employability, etc.) be given more consideration?
- Should there be some weight for degrees with public service and/or research components in them?